

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T KUWAIT 0631

EXDIS

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

CAIRO ALSO FOR ASSIST. SECY. ATHERTON

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4
TAGS: PEBR, EG, XF
SUBJECT: CONVERSATIONS WITH BAHAA'EL DIN ON SADAT APPROACH
TO NEGOTIATIONS WITH ISRAEL

1. I AM REPORTING THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION AS OF
POSSIBLE BACKGROUND INTEREST FOR PRESIDENT CARTER'S
FORTHCOMING MEETING WITH PRESIDENT SADAT. THIS
INFORMATION MAY HAVE ALREADY BEEN PROVIDED IN MESSAGES
FROM EMBASSY CAIRO ON WHICH EMBASSY KUWAIT WOULD NORMALLY
NOT HAVE BEEN AN ADDRESSEE.

2. I MET INFORMALLY ON TWO OCCASIONS OVER THE PAST
FEW DAYS WITH AHMAD BAHAA'EL DIN, FORMER CHIEF EDITOR
OF CAIRO'S AL-AHRAM AND CURRENTLY EDITOR OF AL-ARABI,
A KUWAITI MAGAZINE WITH ARAB-WIDE CIRCULATION. BAHAA,
WHO TRAVELS FREQUENTLY TO CAIRO AND WHO OFTEN SEES SADAT
DURING HIS VISITS, RECOUNTED TO ME A DISCUSSION HE HAD WITH
THE EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT DURING THE WEEK PRIOR TO THE
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ISMAILYIA MEETING BETWEEN SADAT AND BEGIN.

3. BAHAA RELATED AN INCREDIBLE STORY OF THE EBULLIENT
MOOD IN WHICH HE FOUND SADAT DURING HIS MEETING. IN
RESPONSE TO BAHAA'S SKEPTICISM ABOUT THE CHANCES FOR
ANY PROGRESS IN THE UPCOMING ISMAILYIA MEETING, SADAT
EXPRESSED COMPLETE CONFIDENCE REGARDING ITS SUCCESS,

CLAIMING THAT HE HAD AN AGREEMENT WRAPPED UP LITERALLY "IN HIS HAND." WHILE HE DID NOT REVEAL THE ELEMENTS OF THIS AGREEMENT TO BAHA, THE LATTER SAID HE WAS SO IMPRESSED BY SADAT'S HIGH STATE OF EUPHORIA THAT HE WENT AWAY CONVINCED THE PRESIDENT MUST HAVE HAD SOME CONCRETE ASSURANCES ON WHICH TO BASE THIS OPTIMISM. SADAT'S GREAT DISILLUSIONMENT WAS CLEARLY EVIDENT IN THE TELECAST OF THE PRESS CONFERENCE FOLLOWING THE ISMAILYIA MEETING.

4. BAHA WAS AT A LOSS TO ANALYSE HOW SADAT COULD HAVE ALLOWED HIMSELF TO SOAR IN THIS FLIGHT OF FANCY REGARDING A QUICK AND EASY SOLUTION OF THE COMPLEX ARAB-ISRAELI PROBLEM. HE NOTED THAT ONE VIEW WIDELY HELD IN CAIRO IS THAT AMERICAN ASSURANCES WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS ATTITUDE. I EXPRESSED MY PROFOUND DISBELIEF IN THIS RESPECT.

5. BAHA NOTED THE STUNNED CONFUSION OF THE EGYPTIAN PEOPLE OVER THIS TRAIN OF EVENTS AND FELT THAT THE RESULTANT IMPACT OF THEIR REACTION WOULD GREATLY DIMINISH SADAT'S POPULARITY. HE FEARED THE EGYPTIANS WOULD COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT EITHER SADAT WAS TERRIBLY NAIVE TO HAVE EXPECTED A QUICK SOLUTION TO THE ARAB-ISRAELI PROBLEM OR THAT HE WAS TAKEN IN BY ISRAELI DECEPTION. NEITHER CONCLUSION WOULD REFLECT FAVORABLY ON HIS
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PERFORMANCE AS A LEADER.

6. DURING THIS LENGTHY CONVERSATION WITH SADAT, BAHA OBSERVED THAT THE PRESIDENT SEEMED TO HAVE ESTABLISHED A PERSONAL RAPPORT WITH THE ISRAELI DEFENSE MINISTER, EZER WEIZMANN. WHILE SADAT CLEARLY DID NOT WARM UP TO BEGIN OR DAYAN, HE APPARENTLY HAD A NUMBER OF FRIENDLY AND INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS WITH WEIZMANN WHILE IN JERUSALEM. SADAT FELT THAT WEIZMANN, WHOSE PILOT SON WAS MENTALLY INCAPACITATED DURING THE 1973 WAR AS A RESULT OF A BULLET WOUND IN THE HEAD, HAD A SINCERE INNER DESIRE FOR PEACE.

7. DURING ONE OF OUR CONVERSATIONS, BAHA HAD SOME COMMENTS TO MAKE ABOUT THE NEW EGYPTIAN FOREIGN MINISTER, IBRAHIM KAMEL. BAHA SAID THAT, AS A YOUNG MAN IN HIS LATE TEENS, KAMEL WAS INVOLVED WITH SADAT AND OTHERS IN ACTIVE NATIONALIST OPPOSITION TO BRITISH FORCES IN EGYPT PRIOR TO THE REVOLUTION. THEY WERE BOTH JAILED DURING THAT PERIOD. BAHA BELIEVES THAT KAMEL MAY HAVE KILLED TWO OR THREE BRITISH SOLDIERS IN ONE OF THE RAIDS CONDUCTED AT THAT TIME. HE BELIEVED KAMEL

TO BE AN ABLE DIPLOMAT, THOUGH NOT AN INTELLECTUAL
IN THE SENSE THAT FAHMY WAS. BAHA THOUGHT THAT KAMEL'S
DEDICATION TO NATIONALIST AND PATRIOTIC GOALS OR
CAUSES WHICH HE CONSIDERED IMPORTANT TO THE COUNTRY WOULD
BE COMPLETE, EVEN IF IT MEANT PERSONAL DANGER. ON
THE OTHER HAND, IF KAMEL WERE TO BE CONVINCED THAT SADAT'S
POLICY WAS LEADING EGYPT IN THE WRONG DIRECTION, BAHA
BELIEVED HE COULD MAKE MORE TROUBLE FOR SADAT THAN
FAHMY EVER DID.

8. BAHA CONCLUDED HIS COMMENTS ON KAMEL BY RECALLING
A PICTURE ON THE TELEVISION OF BEGIN, DAYAN, SADAT AND
KAMEL STANDING TOGETHER IN A GROUP AND NOTING THAT ALL OF
THEM HAD HAD BLOOD ON THEIR HANDS.

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9. COMMENT: IF BAHA'S ACCOUNT OF SADAT'S MOOD WAS
CORRECT- AND I HAVE NO REASON TO BELIEVE THAT IT WAS NOT--
THEN IT IS EASY TO UNDERSTAND SADAT'S DEEP FRUSTRATION AND
SUBSEQUENT ABRUPT ACTION IN BREAKING OFF THE
POLITICAL COMMITTEE NEGOTIATIONS IN JERUSALEM.
MAESTRONE

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